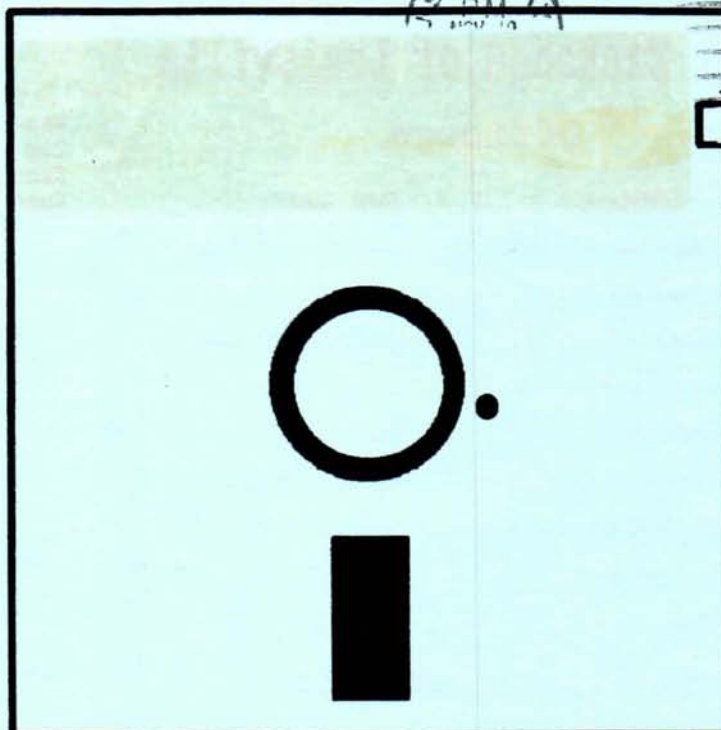


From:

Atari Exchange of Louisville
P.O. Box 34183
Louisville, Ky. 40232

To:

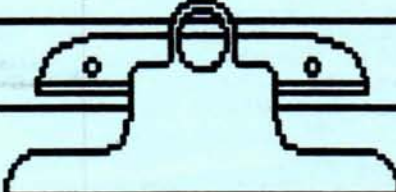


NOVEMBER 1987



NOVEMBER 1987

ATARI EXCHANGE OF LOUISVILLE



Topic of the month:
SPARTADOS CONSTRUCTION SET

Articles included:
SpartaDos Construction Set
Bulletin Board Humor

ST Articles:
800 X-former
Deskart Part 2
World Karate Championship
dBrain/Regent Base Tutorial #1

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 DCSig Meeting	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 Business Meeting
15	16	17	18 Officers Meeting	19	20	21
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29	30					

Atari Exchange of Louisville

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VP Membership: *Jerry Badger*
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All dues paying members of the Atari Exchange of Louisville are encouraged to submit an article to the editor for publication. The deadline for submissions is the 3rd Saturday of each month. Articles may be edited and/or published at the discretion of the editor. Electronic format is preferred on either disk or uploaded via modem. AtariWriter, STWriter or non-justified ASCII file types are preferred. Send them to Jack Link, 7501 Sunset Lane, Crestwood, KY 40014 or upload to the Atari Exchange of Louisville's ATARI SCENE BBS at (502) 964-2924.

Business Meeting

The Business Meeting for the Atari Exchange of Louisville is held on the 2nd Saturday of each month at the Central Jefferson County Government Center, 7201 Outer Loop, Louisville KY. The library opens for returns at 11:00am and the meeting begins at 11:30. Dues for one year are \$20.00 per person/family. Membership includes monthly issues of AELien Transmissions (not mailed), access to the AEL software library, and privileged access to the ATARI SCENE BBS.

DCSig

The DCSig meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month at the Bon Air Library, 2816 Del Rio Place at 6:30pm. Sig leader is Joe Mattingly. This group is now becoming the place to discuss the Atari 8-bit computers.

ASTRO Sig

The ASTRO Sig meets to discuss the latest on the ST line of Atari computers. Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of each month, 7:00pm at the Bon Air Library, 2816 Del Rio Place. The sig leader is Jack Link.

BASIC Sig

This is the oldest of the AEL sigs hosted by Don Garr. Each month, a new and exciting topic of the BASIC programming language is analyzed in depth. The group assembles after the business meeting on the second floor of the Government Center building.

dBman/Regent Base Sig

This newly formed sig is for those who wish to learn more about programming the new generation of database applications. Charles Crowder will be presenting this information filled topic immediately following the business meeting.

For the finest Atari Bulletin Board in
Kentucky, call the Atari Exchange of Louisville's
Atari Scene BBS
(502) 964-2924



AELIEN TRANSMISSIONS

The Information Exchange Newsletter of the Atari Exchange of Louisville

Business Meeting Minutes

by Rich Link

The meeting was called to order at 11:30, President Don Garr presiding. Jody Estes was absent so Rich Link agreed to take the minutes.

The topic of the month for November will be SpartadOS for the 8 bit line of Atari computers. Gary Brockie and Jason Dickens agreed to write articles about the operation, structure and advantages of this versatile operating system.

There were two visitors from the local MicroLeague Baseball Association. Warren Donaldson and Dave Azzara gave a brief talk about the group which meets once a week to conduct a computer baseball league using MicroLeague Baseball and Atari computers. Persons interested in joining the league can call Dave at 239-1106.

Tips from other newsletters: There is a bug in the TurboBasic XL compiler. Subscripted variables cannot appear on both sides of an equation. The ACORN Kernal published a fix for 1040 ST computers with a "squeal" problem. The Mile High newsletter has a review of the OSS Writer's Tool word processor. PrintShop is not totally compatible with the 850 interface. Graphix Disk 3 has a fix.

Gossip and rumors about Atari: OSS is publishing programs under a Bareware Series. The 1st XLENT Word Processor is receiving good reviews. Alice Pascal is now available for the ST. It is a Pascal interpreter and is excellent for debugging. The price is about \$79.95. Signum is a British word processor which is said to make a 9 pin dot matrix printer look like a laser. KayBee toys has started advertising for the XE game machine. And there are rumors of an ICD graphics enhancement

coming for the 8 bits but no specifics were available.

The membership voted to purchase 3 new programs for the library. The 1st XLENT Word Processor, MSDOS & GW BASIC and the SpartadOS Utilities will be ordered.

Rich Link discussed new changes to the Atari Scene BBS including several new message bases. There was a computer trade show being held at the Executive Inn West. Supposedly, all computer lines were being represented. Lloyd Bromwell has a 1 meg MACintosh with Imagewriter for sale for \$1800. The demonstration for the day was of BBS Express. Jack and Rich Link had hardwired an 800xl running BBS Express to an ST running Flash. All functions could be testing including downloading and posting of messages.

The meeting was adjourned and the library was opened.

Library Notes

by Chyrel Oliver

After a one-month hiatus due to an overly busy school schedule, I'm finally updating the activities of the exchange library. We have had quite a bit of activity before and after the meetings as well as some activity between meetings. I'm not readily available during the week, but give me a call if I can be of assistance to you.

On a down note, we do have some programs that are overdue to the library. I won't list those people responsible this month, but if you are one of them, please return the materials as soon as possible.

I am hoping to have an updated printout of all of the holdings in the AEL Exchange Library very soon. We have not received any new programs that have been ordered by the Club. All of the additions to the library since I have taken office have been through donations. Again, I encourage everyone to go through their original programs at home and find just one that you can donate to the library. There are some very popular programs that we don't have and that are often requested. Remember only YOU can keep our library growing.

I will not be at the November and December meetings due to my Junior Varsity debaters having meets on those two Saturday mornings, but my capable assistant Clay Crouch will be at each meeting with the Library. Again, we are bringing the complete Disk collection, the complete Cartridge collection, Magazines with Disks for the most recent twelve months and the Newsletters that are available. If there is a book or a magazine without a disk that you need, just call me prior to the Saturday of the meeting and I will have the material ready for you at the meeting. My number is 491-2821. Just leave a message if you get a recording.

In October I did have copies of the membership list available. If you didn't pick up one, ask Clay for your copy this month. Please check your information and if there is a mistake please let me know.

Due to a couple of the number cards being accidentally taken home and one card being torn, I will have new number cards this month. These will work the same as usual, but they will be laminated so they can withstand the wear and tear while you are patiently waiting for your turn at the Library.

Programs donated in September and October:

Star League Baseball--Lawrence Estep
Forem BBS Disk--Lawrence Estep
Backup Master--Paul Bledsoe
Centipede Cartridge--Paul Bledsoe
Pacman Cartridge--Paul Bledsoe
Asylum Cassette--Paul Bledsoe
Video poker--Nick Nicoulin
Hardball--Clay Crouch
Hulk-James Gawthrop(Welcome to AEL James)
Zaxxon Cassette--Charles Vittitov

Zaxxon Cassette--Charles Vittitov
An Invitation to Programming 3--Don Himes
Teacher's Pet--Jackie Arnold
Online Today Magazines (May-August, 1987)--Lawrence Estep

SpartaDOS Construction Set

by Gary L. Brockie

For this months newsletter I will review SpartaDOS Construction Set from ICD Inc. There are two ways you can buy SpartaDOS Construction Set. First when you buy the US Doubler upgrade for the ATARI 1050 disk drive (about \$69.95) SpartaDOS Construction Set is included. Second, it can be bought separately for about \$39.95. If you have an ATARI 1050 disk drive, and you have no plans to convert your 1050(s) to Happy then you should seriously consider getting the US Doubler/SpartaDOS Construction Set upgrade; it's a bargain.

I cannot review SpartaDOS Construction Set without writing a little bit about the US Doubler upgrade. US Doubler does several things for you 1050 disk drive. First, US Doubler gives your 1050 the ability to read, write, and format all densities available to ATARI owners; single, dual, and double density. Second, US Doubler can transfer data at three times the normal disk drive to computer baud rate on disks formatted by SpartaDOS. You are reading correctly. That means you can read and write three times faster than normal! Lastly, the US Doubler upgrade makes the 1050 read and write more accurately, that makes using write without verify less risky. US Doubler is very easy to install, and in most cases all you have to do is swap two IC's.

SpartaDOS Construction Set is not a construction set in the same sense as Pinball Construction Set, but it does provide the utilities to customize SpartaDOS disks for the computer and application in which the disk will be used. For instance, SpartaDOS is very command oriented like both MS-DOS and CP/M, but can be used with a menu utility that provides all of the same functions as the normal DOS configuration. The menu program is also unique in that unlike DOS 2.0 or

2.5, you can tag files for an operation. That is, you will have before you a list of files on the current disk and you highlight any combination of files for an operation such as copy, delete, and so on.

SpartaDOS Construction Set comes with seven versions of SpartaDOS. Four of the DOS's are for the older 400/800 computers (1.X versions). The other three versions take advantage of features unique to the XL/XE computers (2.X/3.2 versions). The main difference between versions 1.X and 2.X/3.2 is memory usage. In the XL/XE series, SpartaDOS loads into the RAM that occupies the same address space as the ROM operating system. Consequently, these versions are larger (about 11K) and have more resident commands. In addition, support for the US Doubler High Speed and an ATARI DOS 2.0 driver are included in the 2.X version of SpartaDOS. One 2.X version is for compatibility with AUTORUN.SYS and ATARI cartridge software that uses the disk drive, such as AtariWriter (guess which DOS I'm using with AtariWriter to compose this article?) and ATARI Artist. The 2.X/3.2 versions prioritize SpartaDOS and STARTUP.BAT. Also, the 2.X/3.2 versions of SpartaDOS Construction Set have a variety of RAMdisks that support all XL/XE memory configurations. One RAMdisk lets one use the 8K of RAM under BASIC as a small RAMdisk. Another lets you configure the extra 64K in the 130XE as a RAMdisk with selectable drive number (D1:-D8:). There is also a RAMdisk for the XL's with the 256K RAM upgrade similar to that of the 130XE except that it gives you a 192K RAMdisk! In the 2.X/3.2 versions there is even a command that lets you turn BASIC on and off! No more having to hold the OPTION key. The wonderful people at ICD have not forgotten those with binary load programs. Included with SpartaDOS Construction Set is a program called LOGOMENU.COM. This is a colorful menu program that when used as a AUTORUN.SYS program will turn off BASIC automatically and present you with a menu of all binary load files on the disk. You can then load any program by pressing one key.

I know that this article is getting a little windy, but SpartaDOS Construction Set offers so many features that I could double the size

of this article and still not do this package justice. One thing I think that most users will appreciate is the fact that SpartaDOS has time and date support. All new files and revisions to existing files are stamped with the date and time of the revision. There are two ways you can use this feature. First, you can use a software clock calendar that is included with SpartaDOS. When you invoke the SET command you will be queried for the date and time, as long as the computer is on this clock will be maintained. Second, if you buy the optional R-TIME cartridge from ICD SpartaDOS, you can use it's battery backed up clock/calendar for time stamping. Another big feature that SpartaDOS offers is the ability to create and use subdirectories for files. Subdirectories are useful for organizing a busy disk by categorizing your files. For instance, on a game disk you may have both racing and maze games, simply create a sub-directory named MAZE and one named RACE. Then you can use the XCOPY or SPCOPY utility to tag all of the RACE games and put them in the RACE sub-directory, and the same for the MAZE games. Anyone who has a high density disk with a lot of different filenames will appreciate the ability to organize related files in subdirectories. This feature is much like file folders in GEM. SDCS also supports all known disk drives for the ATARI computers, including the SUPRA hard disk drive. SDCS includes a command CONFIG which will automatically determine the type and density of an addressed disk. CONFIG allows me to use my 720K disk drive with a PERCOM controller as D3:.

The last two features that I will cover are the Keyboard features and the BATCH processing features. Have you ever noticed that your ATARI computer allows you to only type one key ahead? Well, SpartaDOS has a command KEY (or XKEY for XL/XE) that gives you a thirty-two key type ahead buffer. This command also doubles the rate at which a key is repeated when held down. The last feature that I will cover in this article, (but not by any means the last SpartaDOS Construction Set feature) is the feature that largely allows you to customize your disks, BATCH processing. SpartaDOS allows you to create a file that will automatically invoke a series of computer commands for you. All you

need to do is use a text editor and create a file with all of the commands typed in the order that you would type them in after SpartaDOS has been loaded. For example, the following would set up a 130XE RAMDisk as drive 4, and turn off BASIC.

```
RD130 D4:
BASIC OFF
```

A special type of BATCH file allows you to define the commands that you want performed upon booting your SpartaDOS disk. Simply write a BATCH file with those commands and name that file STARTUP.BAT. The commands will be performed automatically upon booting, just as if you were typing them yourself.

Well is SpartaDOS Construction Set perfect? No, there are always isolated pockets of incompatibility but, these are very few! However, you cannot gain all of these powerful features and be compatible with everything. I should say here that I have never had a compatibility problem with the US Doubler! All incompatibilities have been a result of software causes. If you have the money I can highly recommend SpartaDOS Construction Set. It gives you the absolutely most powerful DOS for the ATARI 8 bit personal computer. If you have a 1050 you're crazy if you don't upgrade it with US Doubler. (Unless of course you have or are going to have Happy installed.) Till next month, keep computing!

State of the Software Art

by Charles E. Crowder Jr.
Contributing Editor - ASTRO SIG

The long awaited ST-Transformer for emulating the Atari 800 has finally arrived. It was published in the September issue of ST-Log after several months of wrangling and bickering between Darek Michoka (the author), the user community, and Atari Corp. in the person of Neil Harris.

To give you a little background on what has been happening on this issue, Darek wrote the 6502 emulator that has made the rounds of the BBS's in this area with a primitive, partially functional version of the Atari 800

emulator and a partially functional version of an Apple II emulator.

Darek sent copies of the program to Apple Computers and Atari Corp. last year in the hopes of getting some kind of blessing from both. Instead, Apple responded by saying they would sue if Darek released the Apple II emulator which he went ahead and did with no response on the part of Apple, while Atari Corp. ignored the emulator until it was published in the March, 1987 issue of ST Applications.

Atari complained and the editors of the magazine responded by removing the emulator from any disks that were sold afterwards and asked their readers to remove the program from any disks already shipped.

Meanwhile, Darek had sent copies of the emulator to several users groups to show at their upcoming AtariFests. The people who saw the emulator were very pleased with it although it was far from complete. Atari still refused to acknowledge that they had seen or heard of it and responded to requests from the users groups that Atari OK the emulator for release by saying they would sue over the use of the Atari 800 O.S. code in the emulator if it was released.

Now this left Atari in a precarious legal position. They have every right to protect the copyright of the Atari 800 O.S. But if they sued Darek over the Atari 800 O.S. code used in the emulator, they would also have to sue Antic Publishing for the FIXXL translator, Analog over the Home-Made Translator, and some other articles that used the code, and Newell Ind. over their many products that use the same code while enduring the backlash of opinion against the company.

With this in mind and the fact that the emulator was becoming a big issue to the user community, Atari Corp., under barrage from many users already over the non-release of many hardware and software packages for both the ST and XE line, gave permission in late May for the emulator to be published if the source code was also released. Darek at first refused to do this, but finally he agreed and Analog grabbed it for release in ST-Log.

Unfortunately though, this does not

end the story. At a Michigan User Group conference in July, Neil Harris used his speech to lash out at the users community and Darek Michoka in particular. He was peeved that some users and users groups were using the GENIE link with Atari to complain about late deliveries of products and "causing" trouble over the release of the emulator while calling Darek "a pain in the ---" and "a lousy programmer". While I don't think this is the attitude of Atari Corp. (at least one of the engineers and a few others with whom I have spoken), it does reflect a personal attitude of one person who needs to reflect upon what the users groups have meant to Atari and what the link on GENIE is for. Users and users groups have sold Atari's products with little thanks or acknowledgement, while the link on GENIE is supposed to give users a chance to talk to Atari personnel about anything that affects their computers, the future of the company, future hardware and software releases as well as problems that the users are having.

Now then, after all that, a review of the ST-Transformer is in order. The version under review is 1.1 as published in the September, 1987 issue of ST-Log. This version supports Player-Missile Graphics, DLI's, all Atari 800 graphics and text modes, Basic Rev.C, left and right cartridge slots, 4 joysticks (the 2 ports double for the missing joystick ports) and sound. However, there are a few things I have found out about this program:

- 1) It does not run most cartridge based programs
- 2) It does not support all hardware locations (support for POKEY is missing for example)
- 3) Programs that load multiple modules do not run (thus Atariwriter will work but Atariwriter+ does not)
- 4) The program seems to be optimized to run Basic programs
- 5) Programs that make extensive use of DLI's, Player-Missile graphics, etc, may not run or run so slowly as to be useless
- 6) Lines drawn in graphics modes will have gaps spaced throughout their length
- 7) Sound only works through 1 channel and within narrow specified frequency limits
- 8) The program runs at approximately 10%-50% of normal Atari 800 speed depending on use of graphics, DLI's, Player-Missile graphics, etc
- 9) Only DOS 2.0 is supported
- 10) While both the left and right cartridge ports are

supported, this is of little use since only a couple of cartridges ever used cartridge port B and the program has problems running binary and especially cartridge programs

While these limits are serious and confining, especially compared to PC-Ditto, remember that this is only version 1.1 of the program and there will no doubt be many upgrades to it from many people since the source code has also been published.

All together this is a great first effort that had to overcome many obstacles (not all of them programming) before it was released.

Until next month, Das Vidanya!

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

or "My Latest ST Toy") - PART II
by Louis Kuhl

In our last issue, Louis began his review of QMI's DeskCart. We have found it contains a **Battery backed clock**, an **Appointment book**, a **Notebook**, a **Card File** and a **Calculator**. We will now continue with the additional features found in this device.

Fifth is a **Typewriter**. It is a two line mini word processor complete with tap bar and can be used for quick notes or for addressing envelopes, etc. The unique feature here is that every time you hit RETURN, that line is sent immediately to the printer. You can also enter any and all printer codes so that the type is your favorite font.

Sixth is an **Address Book**. The format is already laid out for you with space for all the usual info including a one line "Comment". The menu bar includes **ADD**, **UPDATE**, **FIND**, **DELETE**, **PRINT**, **CLEAR** and **DIAL**. Yes, I said **DIAL**. Hook your computer into a modem, find the Address of the person or BBS you want to call, click on **DIAL** and it's done! You have the choice of just picking up the phone and talking or of using the computer.

And that brings us to the Seventh accessory. The **VT-52 Terminal**. This

emulator allows you to communicate with another computer without leaving the GEM application you happen to be using at the time. Just how good this feature is I can't say since I don't have a modem. The instructions do say that it does not have all of the features found in "popular communications programs". It does allow the setting of Baud, Parity and Duplex.

The Eighth accessory is **Keyboard Macros**. This allows the user to create his own key combinations for causing some sort of occurrence on the screen. An example given is SHIFT/Q which calls up the address of QMI. As you can see, macros are step savers. Create a series for your favorite word processor and save a lot of typing. These macros can be Saved to disk and booted automatically.

Ninth is a **Ram Disk**. I know, everyone with an ST has several Ram Disk programs so maybe this would not interest you. But have you ever been in the middle of something and found that you hadn't installed a Ram Disk and can't quit your program without losing it? Or perhaps you always install a Ram Disk and then discover that you could use the space for the program you are currently working on. Well, this Ram Disk can be installed, increased in size, decreased in size or deleted from within your GEM program at any time! Any size. Just type in the number of Kb you want, click on INSTALL and it's done.

The Tenth goodie is **Disk Utilities**. The choices are *COPY*, *DELETE*, *FORMAT*, *RENAME* and *STATUS*. These functions are pretty obvious in meaning, but my favorite is *FORMAT*. It is so easy to get ready to Save something to disk from a word processor, a data base or a spreadsheet and discover that you don't have enough room on your document or data disk to accept the work and you don't have a formatted disk made up! What to do? Go back to the Desktop and you've lost your work. With Deskcart, simply call up *FORMAT*, chose a drive and click on *FORMAT* for either 9 sectors normal or 10 sectors enhanced. (About 10% more room per disk). *STATUS* tells you how much room is left on the disk.

Eleventh, The **Print Spooler**. This

utility allows the user to set up a buffer in his computer of any size desired. This permits material being sent to the printer to be instantaneously transferred to the buffer and then fed to the printer at the printer's own pace while the user can proceed with his work. It's just a big (as big as you chose) holding tank for the printer. No danger of setting the buffer to a number greater than your available memory. **System Free Memory** is the first thing you see when you call up this function. Lines per page, line spacing and margins can also be set from within this utility.

Twelfth is the **Control Panel**. My first reaction was to question this as a "countable" item. After all, the control panel is a "standard" feature of the ST desktop, isn't it? Well no, not unless this ACC file is transferred to all of your program disks, and I have several program disks that don't have enough room left on them for this accessory. Besides, as a "standard" accessory, this ACC takes up RAM. So let's agree that it is a "countable" item. You could go to The Control Panel at any point in any GEM program and change the usual parameters. I won't quibble.

Thirteenth is the **Screen Dump**. Whoa, you say! Enough of this stretching of a point. Screen dump is built into the ST. Well, YES for some and NO for others. I'm one of the "others". My printer (a Smith-Corona D-100), will not give me a screen dump when I press Alternate/Help and I've heard that there are a lot of other printers out there that will not respond properly to this command. With DeskCart's Screen Dump, however, you first load into the computer one of a series of printer drivers from a list furnished with DeskCart, or you can create your own with a printer driver program, also furnished. I chose the printer driver for Epson printers and the screen dump went perfectly. Save your printer driver in the DeskCart Folder and it will be automatically booted each time you boot the computer. And if that isn't enough to tempt those who already have working screen dumps, can you dump both Vertically and Horizontally? I can!

Fourteenth and last (At last!!) **Memory Test**. Click on memory test and

the program checks DeskCart to see if it is still working as it should, tells you which version of TOS is installed, how much RAM is installed and how long it will take to test each memory chip. (30 seconds for 1 Megb.) If you have the time to spare, go ahead and click on TEST. If not, why did you call up this function in the first place? Your wasting time!

Well, that about raps it up. Is it worth the \$99.95 asking price? Maybe not, but at \$69.00 from Software Discounters of America I couldn't resist. The more I use DeskCart, the more I appreciate it's many uses. And for those of you who might want just a bit more, at the end of the instruction book is a nice little review of Database Functions for those who may not be quite "up" on this subject. Knowing a bit about searching on primary and secondary fields comes in handy when using the several "file card" type accessories.

World Karate Championship

by Todd Rufer

Epyx software has released yet another game for the ST. World Karate Championship lives up to Epyx promise of releasing quality programs for the ST series. When the game boots, you are greeted with a flagpole with a Japanese flag slowly rising on it. When the flag reaches the top of the pole, it turns into the globe and starts to spin. At the same time, theme music is playing in the background and a karate character is showing off his kicks. Heck, the title screen is a program in itself. When loaded, you can select 1 player solo, 2 player mode, or 3 player mode. In 3 player mode you and another player fight against each other plus a computer character, pretty neat. The graphic pictures used in this program are great. Little "extras" are included in the background picture, like a monorail passing by and hot air balloons in the sky. The movement of the characters is very fast and joystick response is easy once you get the hang of it. You travel through 8 different countries fighting and try to build yourself up to black-belt status.

Bonus rounds come after successfully completing 1 round. Breaking bricks with your hands and dodging swords are the two bonus screens.

World Karate Championship will run on either ST model. The program is on 2 disks. The only problem I have found with this whole package is the program is copy-protected. My newest revision of Procopy (1.41) wouldn't even break this new protection scheme. Instructions that are included are for the Commodore version, but included in the box is a small piece of paper listing the commands for the ST version. Color monitor is required. This program is for people who like action. This one has plenty of it plus arcade quality graphics. Thanks Epyx!!

dBman / Regent Base Tutorial #1

An Overview of Regent Base & dBman
by Charles E. Crowder Jr.
Contributing Editor - ASTRO SIG

Welcome to the first of a series of tutorials on the use and programming of dBman and Regent Base. All topics covered in this article will be expanded on in the monthly SIG meeting which will be held immediately following the monthly business meeting at the Southwest Jefferson Government Center, in the same room.

To begin to use and program in the languages these database programs use, it is necessary to understand what type of programs they are and the differences between them and the simpler databases available for the earlier Atari and other computers. These two programs are very similar to the database programs available for the IBM systems and are very powerful. They are *RELATIONAL DATABASES* as compared to Database Managers for the 8-bit computers.

What are the differences between them? Well, Database Managers, such as SYNFIL+, FILEMANAGER 800, dB MASTER ONE (ST), and BASE TWO (ST) are only capable of working with one file at a time. *RELATIONAL DATABASES*, such as dBman and Regent Base, can access multiple files and indexes and cross-reference data between them in any way that they have been programmed

to do. The only problem with this is that it is very complicated to do, especially compared to the DATABASE MANAGERS, where all you have to do is to define the record setup.

Ok, now that we have established what the differences between the two main types of databases are, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the two database programs covered here? Following is a table that covers the features of the two programs with a discussion of their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Category	dBman	Regent Base
Power	*****	****
Use GEM	***	*****
Speed	*****	*****
RAM Disk	Y	Y
Intuitive	*	***
Efficiency	*****	*****
Ease of Use	***	***
Accessories	Y	Y
Sort/Reorder	Y	Y
Screen Layout	varies	varies
Printer Driver	N	Y
Attractiveness	varies	*****
Multiple Files	10	2
Multiple Index	8 per file	no limit
Manual	*	**
DATA Compression	Y	Y
Command files	*****	*****
Help	***	***
Graphs	N	N
Editor	Y	Y
Mail Merge	Y	Y
Records/file	2 billion	disk
Record Size	4000	no limit
Fields/Record	128	no limit

You will note the differences in the two programs. Of the two, dBman is the more powerful but the most difficult to use. In dBman, you must actually define the screen layout in you command file, while in Regent Base the screen is laid out via a screen editor and referenced from the command file. While dBman may have some limitations on the max size of records and files, these are not even worth worrying about unless you plan on running NASA, since very few of us will need to access more than 2 billion records at any one time. Essentially, Regent Base and dBman are similar in this area.

While both programs supply an editor, you may write your command

files on a word processor such as 1st Word or ST-Writer Elite and import them into the program. IMPORTANT - USE ONLY WORD PROCESSORS THAT PRODUCE TRUE ASCII FILES. DO NOT USE "THE FINAL WORD" FROM MARK OF THE UNICORN. IT USES A NON-ASCII CHARACTER AS AN EOL MARKER.

Although both allow use of the GEM desktop and desk accessories (dBman only from version 3.03 on), both of these programs use the major portion of available memory in an unexpanded 520ST and thus will limit desk accessory use. Regent Base uses about 400K for itself, while dBman uses about 340K. An important difference between them is the use of all GEM functions. dBman was imported from the IBM world and shows this since the only fonts usable is the system font and ASCII screen layout. Regent Base was designed for the ST and allows full use of the advanced GEM features.

Both programs use a "programming language" to define the command files. dBman's is similar to the language used for dBase III for the IBM PC. Files from dBase III may be used in dBman after conversion for the differences between the languages. Regent Base uses it's own design language and thus is not compatible with any other database language. This is not that bad though, since no other language allows the use of GEM, which can help ease the use of a command file and the language of Regent Base. The main problem here is that dBman allows command files to be as large as system memory, but Regent Base is limited to 8 pages (at least until v.1.1).

I hope that this has helped you to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the two programs. Both are suitable for whatever database applications you may require and are very powerful. Regent Base is available in the ASTRO library for examination (*Please do not make illegal copies of this program*). There is also a dBman/Regent Base message section on David Brown's Twilight Zone BBS. The number is 456-4403, 24 hours, 300/1200 baud. I will post example command files, reviews, useful compiled dBman databases, and copies of these articles there for d/l. Any questions may be directed to me on that BBS or on the Atari Scene.

Next Month: Basic Database information

FLASH!! HOT NEW BULLETIN BOARD NUMBERS!

Exclusive ATARI Report for AELien Transmissions
by Captain C.T. Pike Jr.

As a continuing feature this magazine strives to keep you up to date on the latest happenings in the world of electronic bulletin boards. For those of you who have modems, we present here fresh, hot-off-the-press updates on the most popular new BBSs in the area. For those without modems, you'll surely want to rush out and buy one after reading this article.

DISCLAIMER: Opinions expressed in this article are not those of the management of this esteemed periodical. Also, any similarity between the characters, places, and events in this article and any real people -- living, electronic, or other -- is strictly coincidental, humorous, and probably well deserved.

THE CICADA BBS, 555-6666: This BBS has more bugs than the BEEBLE BOARD. It's part of the fun of bulletin boarding to call up and get error messages, isn't it? Well, this BBS, using the DOS-N-BUG program, really keeps the user on his or her toes. It puts out fake error messages after you've typed in a lengthy message or uploaded a long file. (The sysop disavows any responsibility for your resulting heart attack.) And at key moments the program produces simulated lockups. Then it spits nasty messages when you hit keys like ESCAPE, BREAK, RESTART, or CHOKS. After some crucial seconds go by -- just enough to leave you panicked and frustrated -- it goes live and says "FOOLED YOU!, DIDN'T I?!" You must call this board. It's a riot.

CYTO-PLASM BBS, 555-0000: One of the biggest bulletin boards on the planet, with a billion megs! However, it's ALL filled up, even though ALL files are "NUKED" (super-duper-scrunched) down to a few bytes each. Unfortunately, the "DE-NUKE" program has more bugs than the entire Silicon Valley, making all the programs nonfunctional.

JUMPIN' JACK'S BBS, 555-0909: This board is up and down more than a yoyo. Sysop Jack "The Bean" Stalk puts the board up at random hours each day. "We're the most dependable BBS around," he says. "You NEVER know when we're up. You can't get any more reliable than that."

SYSOPLAND BBS, 555-5555: The ultimate computer bulletin board, for sysops only. There's no such thing as a "new user" on this board: The ONLY way to get on is to have called before and already gotten your

access validated.

THE BILLBORED BBS, 555-3456: Sysop Bill Bored, tired of a lifetime of being the butt of jokes about his name, gets his revenge online. The special feature of this BBS is its download directory, which contains nothing but BILLS. When you download a file, you get a bill: You owe the Phone Co. \$20. ... You owe the Electric Co. \$90.... You owe the milkman \$15.... And on and on. It's loads of fun.

BEDLAM BBS, 555-9999: Remember the old Insanity Message Base? Well, this BBS makes Doc Strange look like child's play. The Bedlam Board is run by Dr. Baby, a veterinarian. Only sick animals call this BBS. As Dr. Baby would put it, "UCCHHH! DER-SPLAT! HHHHHHE. KER-PLUNK! BARF! SPLUDGE! PPPBBBBBBbbppppppppp--BRRAPPP!! (FILTH!) HHHHHHHHHHHHEHEHEHE." Etc., etc., ad nauseum. The idea behind this BBS seems to be to give juvenility a bad name. It succeeds.

ADAM AND EVE'S BBS, 555-6969: This is the "Playboy Channel" of modemland -- a "LUV Board 4 U", as they say. All the messages contain vague sexual innuendos, double entendres, talk about bogus "olympics," etc. But while there seem to be thousands of callers leaving these lovely notes, in reality all the messages are sent by just five lonely guys masquerading as stags and broads under a multitude of "handles." IT'S TRUUUUUE!

The unwary caller who doesn't know this has to sit thru HOURS and HOURS of messages -- hundreds of new ones every day! -- thinking to himself that this must be a great BBS because it's so busy. "Boy," he thinks, "there must be lots of dates out there." Meanwhile, the sysop and his four lonely friends are having a beer blast on the other side of the screen as they watch the sucker -- er, caller -- vainly trying to zip thru the voluminous verbiage.

"Hey," one of them says, "let's disable Control-N. Let's disable Control-everything! That'll slow 'em down!" They spend all their spare time typing up mountains of phony messages to put on the eight-disk drive system. Their biggest worry is running out of pseudonyms.

BOGEY BILL'S BIG BOY BBS, or the BBBBBS, 555-8888: Don't tell anybody, okay? This is just between us, right? This is the ace, prime, big-cheese, numero uno PIRATE bulletin board around. It operates at 614,400 baud on a Cray-64 home computer, the most powerful "personal" computer on this side of the galaxy. It's so strong that if you 300-bauders so much as try to call in, your computer will be fried to smithereens right over the phone line!

This BBS is so secret that Sysop Bill has to keep it on the run 24 hours a day, like the Air Force's flying command center airborne all the time over the SAC base at Omaha. Bill's BBS hardware is permanently installed in his supervan, with a mobile phone signal beamed to a payphone at the corner of Eighth and State. You'll see the van circling the area on I-264, except when the Feds home in on the signal and Bill's forced to take to the back streets.

Every 8-bit program ever written is in the files section of this BBS, and the sysop maintain a staff of chimpanzees randomly typing away 18 hours a day on a whole bunch of keyboards in order to keep up the supply of programs. (Remember the old theory about how if you give a chimp enough time to randomly hit the keys, he will eventually come up with Shakespeare? Well, that's wrong. But it works here, because it's REAL EASY to create 8-bit computer programs!)

For those of you pirates too cheap to buy a 614,400 baud modem (and you're all cheap, aren't you?), just get a 9600 baud modem and boost its output by a factor of 64. To keep your status on the BBBBBBS, make sure to upload 15 of your own crummy programs for each download, and no fair changing filenames of programs already uploaded!

THE CATCH 22 BBS, 555-2222: Professor Doubledome, the sysop, has taken this board private, according to the news he's been spreading all over local boards. But when you go to apply for his "free trial," your application is rejected because Professor Doubledome considers you to be a hacker who only wants to destroy his BBS.

THE MUSTANG BBS, 555-4884: Remember the BBS set up by some attorneys? Well, they merged with the board run by the Horse Park of a certain nearby state. Now you legal beagles can get online advice straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak. (And if you don't like what you get, you can always complain that it came from the horse's other end.)

SESAME STREET BBS, 555-1234. This is another one of those itay-bitay boards, run by an eager-beaver 12-year-old. You know, the kind run on a [brand name deleted -- actually, it's a Commodore] computer, claiming to be up 24 hours a day, ten days a week, and 48 hours a day on weekends? The kind of BBS you saw advertised on every "general" message base within 500 miles, with messages left by Kiddie The Sysop saying "Call my board!", "Call the Crook Board!", "Call my board!!," etc., etc., and then when you do, it's disconnected.

The usual story in these cases is that kiddo has been sneaking the BBS onto the phone line when his parents are away at

work during the day. When the parents get tired of shrill, 100-decibel beeps on the phone at 4 a.m., they rip the phone out of the house. The only winner here is the Phone Company, who charge you for making a long distance call even though all you got was one of their blasted messages. (But that line noise makes for great graphics effects on the screen, doesn't it? Better than the ASCII pictures on RJ's.)

(Captain C.T. Pike Jr. is the non-de-modem of a curmudgeon who reportedly uses his IBM clone for "serious" computing, but retains loyalty to the old Atari 800 computer. Captain Pike evidently is a veteran caller to public access bulletin boards.)

Classifieds

For Sale: MacIntosh computer with 1 meg of memory, disk drive, monochrome display, ImageWriter II printer. Software includes DOS, tutorial, FileWriter, etc. \$1800.00

Contact Lloyd Bromwell at 964-4940



If you have just purchased a new piece of software or hardware for your Atari computer, won't you share your opinions and experiences about it with your fellow members? Write that article for the newsletter and show you wish to be an active part of the club.